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VOCALISM

ITS STRUCTURE AND CULTURE FROM AN ENGLISH STANDPOINT

BY

W. H. BREARE

EDITOR OF THE "HARROGATE HERALD"

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PREFACE

IN submitting this work, I advance no mere supposititious theory. Every point I have tested, proving its practicability. The methods I have arrived at by close analysis of the English language and the vocal faults and virtues of others. I am actuated, firstly, by a desire to show how our language may assert its emotional beauty; secondly, to obviate some of the difficulties which beset the paths of teachers and pupils; thirdly, to assist the general student to that intelligent discrimination by which the standard of all vocalism may be elevated.

W. H. BREARE.

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VOCALISM

VOCALISM

INTRODUCTION

THE art of singing is no more spontaneous than any other mechanical exercise. Art, whether graphic, dramatic, terpsichorean, or musical, is but the accomplishment of certain ideal graces of form or sound attained only by mechanical means through analytical preparation and application. As in nature but two fundamental forms exist (the straight line and the curve), so in voice production the mechanics of vocal sound are simple and limited. It is when we seek variety of form and expression that lines and curves must enter into combinations to convey various impressions styled emotions. Upon the ability to reproduce with pencil correct lines and curves depends the illustrative power of the graphic artist. Equally necessary is it for the vocalist

to grip with unerring accuracy the fundamental mechanism which governs the human voice.

English vocal systems are mainly founded upon Italian methods. Although vocal art owes much to the latter, they cannot be said to meet every English requirement. Perfect pronunciation being essential to perfect tone, Italian methods cannot provide for the manifold varieties of expression encountered in the English language. It is necessary, then, to consider English vocal requirements from an English standpoint. All nations have a similar ideal; but it can only be approached by the channel appropriate to each particular language.

That many vocal laws have a common application goes without saying.

A well-known teacher has denounced the smiling position, and insists upon the fixed "ah" mouth. It is the interminable vocalisation on "a," as in "father," which has done so much to ruin English pronunciation and limit the variety and expressiveness of the singing voice. Might as well attempt to paint with

Reckitt's Blue and Colman's Mustard as to essay the musical representation of emotional English always with the Italian "a."

Vocalising on a single vowel sound is akin to developing one particular set of muscles to the neglect of all others. There are peculiarities in certain voices which render it undesirable to accentuate the development of one particular vowel sound. Variety of vowel practice is necessary in order to equalise the production of the many elements of tone quality.

BREATH MANAGEMENT

THE harmonium affords the best example to the singer of perfect tone production. The bellows correspond with the human lungs, the reeds with the so-called vocal cords. But the singer has the inestimable advantage of pliant lips, tongue, and sensitising breath, capable of imparting innumerable qualities or suggestions of emotional sound with ease and rapidity. One has but to produce a note, with the lips describing a small circle (as in whistling), gradually increase the circumference of that circle, whilst maintaining a steady flow of breath, and the varied character of the sounds emitted thereby suggests the varieties of emotional tone of which the human voice is capable. Yet this is but a mechanical expedient largely dependent upon the flow of breath for its power and mood. The firm sustenance of the harmonium is attained by the steady flow of wind from its reservoir—the

air chamber. The lungs of the vocalist should be similarly employed. It is not sufficient to inhale by a gasp which, whilst merely inflating the upper portions of the lungs, creates an asthmatic quality of tone. It is generally advisable to inhale through the partially open mouth, deeply, feeling that every muscle of the body is contributing its proper quota of work. The muscles must have opportunity to expand in respiration and contract in expiration. The latter produces the wind which creates sound from the human instrument—the voice. The waist and abdominal regions should therefore have free play, unrestricted by tight clothing. There are times when in singing it is advantageous to inhale by means of the nostrils. Apart from vocal breathing, it is especially desirable to cultivate the habit of thus inhaling. It is neglect of this cultivation which often gives to the voice a thickness of utterance suggestive of chronic cold in the head.

I have known great benefit to arise from the employment of the nasal douche charged with tepid salt water.

The more simply breath management can be presented to the student, the better. It is sufficient to impress him with the necessity of deep, natural inhalation, to which the muscles of the body naturally and comfortably contribute, without encumbering his mind with abstruse anatomical problems. To overload a student's brain with avoidable technical detail is to prevent concentration of mind upon urgent vital principles.

The first exercise of breath may be associated with the simultaneous study of tone quality, sustenance, and facial influence. These elements are all more or less dependent on each other, but must be considered in detail under their respective heads. A single note affords sufficient opportunity for the practice of breath sustenance and pressure. I prefer, in a first instance, to employ the vowel "a" (as in father) for the experimental sound, because we are thus freed from the trammels of a consonant. By this course we are enabled to attack without delay, in a simple manner, the problem of natural vocal production.

It is not always wise to confine the pupil to one vowel sound. The selection or selections should be governed by the quality of the student's initial tone. The tendencies of voices vary. Some will possess an open quality, lacking concentration. In these cases it is advisable to choose a more concrete vowel in order to correct a monotonous tendency. Certain voices when employed on "ah" lack the resonance which the condensation of scattered sound often imparts. On the other hand, a voice thick, throaty, or reedy in its tendency should vocalise on more open sounds. To confine the student to one quality of vowel is much akin to the development of one note to the neglect of others equally important. Some vowel sounds are more easy of attainment than others. All should be equalised. Therefore I have held it necessary to vocalise on each vowel element. If equal facilities be the goal, naturally most time will be devoted to the more difficult vowels until the necessary equalisation is attained. Even in exercising, the same atten-

tion to uniform facility of production as regards the consonant ought to be steadily kept in view. Accurate mouth position and flexibility of the lips can only be promoted by exercises which present in rapid succession various vowel and consonant elements. It should always be remembered that a fixed position of the mouth, so long as sustenance of the main vowel quality is desired, must be preserved. Where laxity of jaw which induces a feeling of ease and comfort is not attained, it is difficult to maintain the mouth in a fixed position. As tension of the jaw asserts itself the lips will gradually close and in the operation create varying sensations destructive to uniform tone. The slightest movement of the lips on a sustained vowel will introduce disturbing elements of sound. Many crude singers habitually open their mouths wider and wider upon a sustained note in order to obtain a crescendo. This, of course, is not proper breath management. The mouth must remain fixed on sustained sounds, in an open position, even on the soft-

est notes. The breath should regulate the power.

The vowel "o" is useful for the concentration of tone. Let the student take a deep breath through the partly open mouth; place his lips in the form of the letter "o." As no two mouths are precisely alike, each pupil must be treated in accordance with his facial construction. It may be necessary in cases to extend or diminish the circle; depress it at the mouth-corners, or elsewhere. But the general outline of the "o" must be fairly preserved. This may be determined whilst the tone is flowing.

Let the vocalist attack the selected vowel and note softly, gradually increasing the pressure of breath until medium power is acquired. This force should be maintained for some seconds in order to cultivate firm, even, breath delivery. Where the breath falters, or becomes irregular, the voice loses its concentration, and emits various qualities disturbing to the ear. Thus it becomes necessary to maintain uniform pressure of the breath, and a

fixed position of the lips, while the main vowel sound is to continue.

If we select the open "ah" sound for vocalisation, then the mouth assumes a more oval position. Whilst freely open, the circle described by the lips should be extended towards the mouth-corners. The exact position will be determined much in the same way as that of "o."

"U" in the main necessitates a contracted position. It should begin with the more extended mouth as in the "e," whereupon the lips contract and the "oo" position remains throughout the rest of the note.

"E" is a more difficult sound, because of the tendency to close the teeth. These should be sufficiently open to escape the reedy quality, whilst preserving the approximate sound of the letter. Though the true sound of the "e" should not be disguised, it must be remembered that the unpleasant reedy sensation of the vowel is extreme, and therefore incorrect pronunciation. The mouth requires to be opened sufficiently to escape the nasal quality.

A thin voice encounters most difficulty. In such cases the "e" may be slightly humoured, but not ignored. It is sometimes advisable to accentuate the pronunciation of this vowel at the close, treating it in the delicate instantaneous manner in which finals are executed.

It may be necessary in certain instances, whilst opening the mouth perpendicularly, to contract the under lip at the mouth-corners. The most satisfactory position of the lips will, by experiment, readily be determined so as to meet the requirement of each particular student.

"A" affords a fuller opening, which should, eventually, instantly be closed by the final element, which is "e."

The treatment of the consonant "l" depends upon whether it is a preparation for, or the final element of the vowel. If a preparation, the short effect of "e" is produced, followed by "l," the latter secured by placing the tip of the tongue firmly on the gums inside the upper teeth. If "l" is a final, it must be produced by instantly compelling the tongue

to take this position. As soon as the attack of the final "l" is made secure by firm pressure of the tongue, the tension may gradually be relaxed. If the lips are extended and the cheeks drawn away from the side teeth, the resonant space in the mouth-chamber will be so enlarged as to create effective vibrations of carrying power. This will give the open mouth-corners I have alluded to. The precise position may readily be "felt," as it has a bright and stimulating influence upon the singer.

Difficult vowels may be surmounted by similar enlargements of mouth-space, without affecting the purity of pronunciation, if the singer takes care that the close of the note bears the more acute sound of the main vowel element; for example: the long sound, if the vowel be "e." This influence, however, must not be sustained, but so brief as to become instantaneous.

"D" and "t" are attacked in the same manner.

"S" and "z" necessitate a faint hissing of the breath against the upper teeth.

"R" compels an upward sweep of the tongue's tip or a roll, as the case may demand.

The position of the tongue for "n" is similar to "l," except that the tongue-tip is slightly more flattened against the same gums and requires more force of breath, extended lips and cheeks to increase the resonant area in order to preserve the humming sound.

On "l" the tongue should be held in a looser manner, so as not to confine the vibration of the tone to the slightest possible area.

In "k" every portion of the mouth-cavity seems to be employed in resisting the passage of the breath. This effect is produced by what I prefer to call the "check breath." The tongue in this position, although perfectly flat in the mouth, appears to be drawn backwards to create the largest possible sounding space in the mouth-cavity.

In "q" the grip, so to speak, is not so far back in the mouth as when attacking "k," except that the lips assume a more crumpled or closed position.

"X" requires a slight hissing sound, though it is preceded by the short "e."

What I have termed the "check breath" is very useful in governing the application of wind in attack. The passage of the breath is held in severe check and operates in a staccato fashion. There is considerable distinction between the "explosive" and "check-breath" attacks. The "explosive" directs a full charge of breath with less feeling of that control which the "check breath" demands. The latter may be made so delicate as to be imperceptible, and yet the note will be struck with perfect accuracy and concentration of tone. The "explosive," of course, applies more to the *forte*, the "check breath" to the *piano* delivery.

In accomplishing consonants, delicacy, swiftness, and accuracy are the necessary contributory elements.

It is impossible to describe accurately with the pen the various methods of dealing with vowels and consonants, but, working on the lines I have attempted to indicate, each indi-

vidual singer will realise the mechanism most likely to ensure him success. A pupil may not sift these things for himself except to understand the principles involved, because no one can judge his own vocal effects; yet there is much instinctive feeling, which enables the singer to ascertain when he is on the right path.

Having mastered sustained breathing, variations of breath pressure may be attempted. The crescendo, on the same note, will provide the opportunity. It is a stumbling-block to most students. The tendency of many is to commence the crescendo so loudly as to afford little scope for progressive power. Others will jump from soft to loud with no connecting disposition of intermediate colour. The crescendo must be as regularly progressive as the sign which indicates it. In order to ensure a delicate commencement and faultless symmetry for the crescendo, I have found it a good plan to hold for an instant the first whisper of sound as a kind of foothold, then to follow faithfully the steady movement of a hand from left to

right, increasing the power as the hand moves. When the fullest volume required is reached, the hand should pause for an instant; then, as it slowly returns to the left, decrease the tone in proportion. The return, of course, describes the form of the diminuendo, which presents more obstacles than even the crescendo. When increased breath pressure is conquered, it will be soon enough to assail the diminuendo.

Breath pressure is valuable in obtaining those sudden throbs or pulsations which so convincingly illustrate spasmodic emotion. Such breath employment affords a pleasant and significant substitute for the "percussion" or "explosive" attack, when the ear might otherwise become bruised by repeated blows of sound.

Let it be remembered that the breath is the power, the vocal cords the reeds, the lips the governors of emotional expression. Allow these agents natural play and they will do their own work—even the execution of intricate runs. It is when the individual vocalist will

continue on his own fallacious course, combating natural laws, that Nature rebels. The novice will squeeze his throat, set his jaws, compress his lips in the belief that he commands his breath and tone. Instead of allowing the former to do its work naturally, he will obstruct its passage and divert it to the throat or nasal cavity, where it frets and fumes in derision. "Chewed" and "masticated" words create tremendous sensations in the singer's head, and he is content, little dreaming that his tone is consumed ere it reaches his audience; nothing escapes him but disagreeable sensations. Be it remembered, therefore, properly directed breath is the life, the joy of artistic tone and execution. Those crystallised notes, those perfectly distinct and rounded vocal particles which chase each other in regular order up and down the scale, are impelled by the flowing breath of a natural delivery. They are as symmetrical and evanescent as drops of water, because they are of the same weight, the same structure. They occur at regular intervals,

and are moved by a uniform force which yields only to that inherent sense of rhythmic proportion by which all nature is instinctively swayed. Order reigns with these volatile forces, for have they not their groups, and their leaders, who dominate but sufficiently to mark that masterly subdivision which is the distinguishing element of orderly proportion?

One sometimes encounters vocalists who have such ill-control of their breath as to acquire the habit of pumping each note by a swift crescendo, so that an even, well-sustained legato passage becomes almost an impossibility, for the reason that the breath in the air chamber is exhausted. This arises through the vocalist's discharging his store of wind in blasts, nearly emptying the lungs on a single note. It is a case of breath extravagance, and can only be overcome by acquiring the legato movement.

To correct this, each note should be held the same length, at the same strength, and made to flow into the succeeding note without

a break or any variation of power or quality. The fixed mouth, and a steady current of breath are required for the legato, which, however, I treat in a chapter of its own, independent of that devoted to "breath management."

We shall notice in succeeding chapters how dependent are we upon breath influences.

TONE QUALITIES

WE are accustomed to speak of the character of a voice, using the word QUALITY, in the singular number. In doing so of course we refer to the impression conveyed by the GENERAL character of that voice. Strickly speaking, an expressive voice has many qualities, each indicating some specific temperament or emotion or combination thereof. A single note on a given word, or syllable, may demand various tone-colours expressive of conflicting passions. What I choose to term the mechanics of lyric vocalism provide the means for almost every natural element of human vocal expression. The proper employment of these resources deserves the distinguished appellation — METHOD. All so-called "systems" which do not recognise them are futile.

When a competent critic speaks of a voice as possessing "uniform quality," he means

that all the tones of the vocalist's scale, or range, are in perfect proportion; in other words: bear the same characteristic relation without any startling discrepancies of character between succeeding notes.

For example: Contraltos, in moving from a lower to a higher note, frequently produce a breathy, "head-tone" immediately after a vibrant chest-note of coarse, mannish quality. The contrast is startling, the effect disagreeable; the cause: a complete change of productive method.

It is with reluctance I now use the word REGISTERS. If a pupil desire to escape one of the gravest pitfalls in vocal study, let him forget the term and decline to know anything in connection with what the word may imply. My reason for offering this advice is founded on the continuous study of over forty years. The student who is initiated into the mysteries of the term will be pursued for years by a veritable bogey, which will rob him of the confidence so essential to success and distract the mind from close attention to innumerable

vital points constantly to be borne in mind. Later I shall offer my reasons for detesting the very mention of the word "registers." [See "Equalising the Range."]

Though the term "quality" may admit of the general application mentioned, it must be realised that an expressive voice should be capable of many delicate, distinctive shades illustrative of the true emotions words, correctly pronounced, convey. The variety and effectiveness of vocal qualities are so dependent upon correct pronunciation and enunciation, I have come to regard the following as the golden rule:

PERFECT PRONUNCIATION BRINGS PERFECT TONE

Imperfect qualities of tone are distressingly prevalent. In many instances they are the natural results of unnatural methods. They are largely attributable to bad management of the facial and other physical forces, frequently the breath.

Let us examine some of these faulty tones.

First, take the reedy quality. This irritating sensation often results from a nearly closed mouth which concentrates the tone on the teeth. The free passage of the breath is obstructed, and it either fusses about the top of the nearly closed teeth, or is forced into the nasal cavity, resulting in even worse tone-sensations.

The cotton-wool quality is another vocal fault. The singer, in this case, compresses his lips and cheeks, sets his jaws, and confines his tone to the back of his mouth in the fatuous belief he is concentrating his power. And so he is—at the wrong point. He mouths his words to a woolly consistency and swallows them.

Then comes the so-called "brilliant" soprano with the knifey voice, because she has understood stretched lips and forward production suggest silvery tone. It certainly is a quality of metal—cutlery.

The unnatural contralto wastes her breath in fanning mezzo-tones, or imitates the fog-horn by vocalising on a condensation of "oo."

The misguided tenor either subjects his throat to grappling pressure, or, on the other hand, deals exclusively in open tones of the wet-parchment order.

But why should I dwell upon faults? Though one may learn equally from faults or virtues, it is necessary to master correct methods before the student can profit by the suggestions of either.

VOCAL MOVEMENT

SUSTAINING effect does not depend for its complete success upon breath management alone; facility of vocal movement is a contributory factor. The voice must attain that flexibility which permits it to move smoothly, or fluently, either rapidly or slowly over a succession of notes. As this development lies under the head of voice cultivation rather than voice building, with which I am at present concerned, I can now touch but the fringe of the subject.

The student having learned to produce a sustained tone of fair quality by the help of natural breath management, we will proceed to consider execution in its application to the grouping of successive notes.

A proud mother, musically unsophisticated, once told me her child had learned to "turn a tune." I thought, at the time, how expressive was the phrase. It is, indeed, a feat to suc-

ceed in turning a tune, especially with efficiency and grace. The first step towards this accomplishment is to be able to move the voice faultlessly from one note to another. Let the student produce the original, sustained note he has mastered, hold it long enough to mentally count four, then move to the full tone above, holding it the same length of time. The voice, in moving, should slur the interval by increasing pressure of breath in the first instances only. This will lead to that command over the voice which ensures steady tone. When the security of tone-sustenance becomes infallible, reduce the extravagance of the slur to a graceful glide representing the true portamento. Continue this exercise until the group scale or octave is achieved. After holding the eighth note descend the scale, in the same manner, to the original note forming the point of departure.

Throughout this experiment keep the lips well rounded and in precisely the same position. Any movement of the lips or lapse of mouth-condition will destroy the uniformity

and stability of the tone and encourage a disastrous habit. Let the breath flow freely and naturally with increasing rather than decreasing or intermittent pressure.

Sustained breath induces firm control of the voice.

Later the student will be required to sing a succession of slow notes without gliding from one to another. To accomplish this with ease and facility the following points must be observed:

The mouth must remain at a fixed opening.

Not a muscle of the face should move.

The flow of breath must remain steady.

Hold the first note at medium power.

Do not think about, or anticipate, the second.

Attack the second note suddenly with a swifter flow of breath, squarely on the pitch, and hold it firmly with the breath.

This attack should be made before the vocalist has time to think of anything but the necessity of reaching the note when the teacher says "Now!"

Working on this plan the pupil has no time to become frightened, or to play convulsive tricks. The breath comes forward swiftly, and the note is there before he knows it.

In singing, as in other operations, the anticipation is often worse than the reality.

MORAL :—Don't attempt to cross the bridge before you come to it.

When sustained tone and facility of slow movement are mastered, sing the scale each time faster and faster until the utmost speed consistent with perfectly even execution is attained.

In order to see that the fixed position of the mouth is preserved, it is well to practise before a mirror, taking care to maintain the head in a perfectly upright position, directing the gaze slightly upward rather than in a horizontal direction.

Natural production is comfortable. When a person, either in singing or anything else, finds himself under unrestful conditions, he will know something is wrong. He is struggling against Nature in some way, and will be

defeated. In vocalism the novice wars against natural laws in the hope of solving difficulties. He pits his will-power against natural forces, and creates the very difficulties he would avoid.

A common habit, with basses and baritones particularly, is to draw in and press the chin towards the chest in seeking a low note. It is a senseless trick which cramps the organs and hampers free, natural delivery. Such a constrained position not only betrays bad method, but the tense appearance of the vocalist is distressful to an intelligent, sympathetic audience. It reminds one of the strong man who seeks to impress his audience with the immensity of his weight-lifting by all manner of facial and bodily contortions. The vocalist should remember that easy, natural manners suggest facility of execution. Firm balance and foothold, erect body, square shoulders, and a slightly elevated head are all essential to comfortable delivery. No part of the form should be under restraint. The delivery must be correspondingly easy. This is attained by cultivating a feeling of repose.

An artiste should never direct his gaze where he is likely to catch the eye of a member of the audience—he should look above and beyond the audience—otherwise he will create a feeling of self-conciousness which brings both artiste and audience down to prosaic earth, dispelling the romantic atmosphere so indispensable to true sentiment. As it is the object of the singer to carry his hearers with him, he should be careful whither he takes them.

FACIAL INFLUENCE ON TONE QUALITY

HAVING succeeded in breath management, tone sustenance, and slow execution, let us consider a further element of tone quality. Tones which present no emotional variation become unintelligible, uninteresting, therefore tedious. Expressiveness of tone is quite as important as tone-beauty. Each quality is dependent upon the other. An unprepared, or unfinished vowel sound, though perfect in its main application, is like a picture devoid of convincing colour-scheme. Not only does the main vowel sound of a word or syllable require perfect, uniform production throughout most of the note, but the preceding and final consonant, or both, as the word may demand, must be so accurately enunciated as to give form, colour, and vitality to the sensations the word conveys. Perfect pronunciation and enunciation cannot be obtained without

appropriate facial expression. Words may not be perfectly treated without that facial illustration which places the lips in those natural positions indispensable to correct emotional sounds. Pronunciation supplies the body colour of the tone picture, enunciation the high lights which give life to the subject. The singer must not only feel the emotion sought to be conveyed by the poet, but look it. Unless the face lighten or darken with the sense of the word, the facial conditions which describe the sensations will not be realised.

Remember, a merry note may not be uttered by a pouting mouth, neither can a pathetic tone result from a smiling face.

A fear of affectation often prevents vocalists from attempting to completely illustrate emotions by facial expression. They endeavour to screw their mouths into the desired position whilst their eyes and upper portion of face remain stonified by a contrary mood. Entire failure ensues, and the singer appears not only constrained but ridiculous. Awkward grimaces are the outcome. The audi-

ence can see as well as hear that the vocalist has failed.

The student should study every syllable, word, phrase, sentence. Ponder on the vocal expedient which will best convey the emotional impulse demanded by the situation, and seize the appropriate facial methods which realise the prevailing sentiments. With these I shall deal in a later chapter.

ATTACK

ABSOLUTE purity of quality and style cannot be attained without perfect concentration of tone; and concentration, in its turn, is dependent upon faultless "attack." There are various methods of approaching a given note which are technically correct, but as each has its emotional significance, only that which most fully realises the spirit of the word should be employed.

The "explosive" attack is applicable to a strenuous note indicating passion, surprise, and other similar emotions. The same impulses may be suggested by various methods, yet it will be found that whilst the results are similar, there is always available a "best" attack for a given situation, "best" because most applicable to the distinctive environments of the individual singer. The pupil accustomed to sing spasmodically, with the barking delivery, should use the "explosive" sparingly. The

person who allows his breath to get in advance of instead of behind his tone may be obliged to adopt the swift crescendo attack. I have known teachers to infer that the "explosive" was a swift crescendo. It is not a crescendo at all. In the "explosive" attack the breath is delivered quickly, certainly, but it represents an unchecked BLAST of breath. What I term the "swift crescendo" is just as the term implies. The note consumes the breath.

Another attack I have christened the "check breath"—one of the most useful of all deliveries. It may often serve the purposes of either the "explosive" or the swift crescendo; yet each has such influences of its own as to become distinctive.

The "explosive" not only ensures concentration of pitch and quality, but achieves that dramatic intensity which demands the supreme onslaught of one's vocal power.

This necessitates immovable position of lips quickly formed so as to produce the best concentrated tone on the main vowel sound, and obviate the suspicion of striking under the note.

The breath is delivered, so to speak, in bulk, upon the note, as though discharged from the ribs, as from a catapult.

The swift crescendo attack calls for a gentler discharge of the breath in the swiftest crescendo form. When this attack is delivered properly, the result appears as a condensed note perfectly approached, as concise and clean in its delivery as the vigorous "explosive." It will be discovered that where a vocalist's tone is not quite satisfactory on an "explosive" note, it often becomes extremely beautiful and appropriate under the swift crescendo attack.

Both these resources failing (through the exceptional peculiarities of the singer), the "check breath" will undoubtedly succeed.

To acquire what I term the "check-breath attack" it is necessary the lungs should be fully charged, and so controlled, whilst inflated, that not a puff of breath escapes. Then the note is attacked staccato by emitting swift, clean-cut puffs of breath. To grasp thoroughly the proper action of the breath in this attack, let the student sing very softly and slowly a

succession of "u's" (as in "but"), staccato; at the same time noting the peculiar control of the breath demanded. This attack may be made beautifully delicate, bold, smooth, or impassioned. It gives to certain words bird-like pulsations, buoyant in the extreme, and serves to direct the breath where it belongs—behind the voice. To prevent this vulgar habit of striking under and slurring up to a note, is one of the chief objects of these attacks; though each has its own influences upon cultured vocal "style" and emotional fervour.

Consonant attack I have dealt with under the head of "Consonants," therefore need but say here that these elements must be produced with accuracy, swiftness, and delicacy. So far as their attack is concerned, they are but instantaneous impressions of a most fleeting nature. Flexibility of lip and tongue is essential.

Consonant finals often require to be more or less sustained, in the humming style. Then it becomes necessary to regulate the lips and mouth so as to create the most expansive sound cavity in order to stimulate effective vibrations.

In considering the various methods of attack I have mentioned, it is well to remember that the facial expression governs the emotional character of the voice. If a silvery or bird-like quality expressive of joyousness is required, then the extended mouth, with the corners of the upper lip elevated (as in laughter), should be employed. If the note of sorrow is demanded, then the rounded lips and drawn-in mouth-corners become necessary. Modifications of these emotional expedients realise many expressive moods, and are easily discoverable by any one possessing the semblance of an analytical mind.

PRONUNCIATION—VOWELS

THE principal element of a syllable is determined by the vowel employed. It is necessary, then, to remember that the vowels are: a, e, i, o, u, sometimes w and y.

"A" has four distinct sounds:

"a," as in "hay";
"a," " "father";
"a," " "awe";
"a," " "hat."

"E" has two:

"e," as in "eat";
"e," " "bet."

"I," two:

"i," as in "lie";
"i," " "bit."

"O," two:

"o," as in "owe";
"o," " "not."

The latter approximates to the sound of "a,"

as in "awe," though shorter. The student may sometimes, with advantage, aim at the longer sound of "a" (as in "awe"), which when treated staccato gives about the requisite effect of the short "o" in "not."

"U" has two:

"u," as in "mute";

"u," " "but."

"Oo" is sounded as in "moon."

A vowel rightly employed in the spelling of a word frequently represents in pronunciation, one of the sounds of quite another vowel. In that case a good pronouncing dictionary should be consulted.

Diphthongs are a combination of two vowels apparently representing a single sound. For example:

"oi" in "boy."

"ow" in "how."

A combination of "a," as in "far," and "oo," as in "moon," will produce the essential sound of "o," as in "how."

It is not only interesting, but necessary that the student should analyse all apparently sin-

gle vowel sounds. When we consider the matter, we must come to the conclusion I have long held that literally:

THERE IS NOT TO BE FOUND ONE WHOLE THING IN NATURE

The reader, I anticipate, will exclaim: "What of the vowel 'a' as in 'father'? Surely that represents something whole and complete in itself?"

No! It does not! The vowel "ah" cannot be rounded and completed without the faint element "u," as in "but," for its final.

All apparently concrete substances are made up of various elements. It is important, therefore, that the vocalist should continually analyse in order to obtain intelligent knowledge of that which is required of him. As what is often accepted as a single vowel sound is composed of different elements, the perfect result cannot be attained without due cognisance of those elements, because each necessitates a particular employment of the facial forces.

Let us consider :

The long sound of the vowel "i" is made up of "a," as in "father," and "e," as it occurs in "me." The two sounds sung quickly realise the perfect "i." The "a" is preserved throughout the note, the "e" is the final which completes the "i." Being a final, it should not be sustained, or a thin, nasal tone is the disagreeable result.

Many singers attempt the "u" with crumpled lips. Impeded breath creates a wheezy, head quality, of fog-horn consistency, which by no means suggests the liquid possibilities of the vowel.

"U," in reality, is a combination of "e," as in "me," and "oo," as in "moon," with a further liquid expression where the "e" unites with "oo." The "e" is but a preparation for the "oo."

The "e" attack in this case requires the extended or laughing position of the mouth in order to acquire the pellucid character of "u." It must be very brief and instantly dissolve into "oo," which is the sustained element of the

vowel. The "oo" must be so regulated by mouth position as to give the best tone. It will be found necessary to open the lips rather more perpendicularly on sustained "oo" than when employed as a final. The termination of "u" demands the sound of "oo" realised by nearly closed lips.

Thus we find three distinct impressions and positions in blending the elements of a perfect "u."

With regard to the dominating sound of "oo" in "u," the accurate position of the mouth must be secured and preserved until the closing lips define the final sensation of the less open "oo."

If the mouth be too widely opened on "oo" the tone will acquire the sound of "o." If excessively closed, resonance is lost and breathy quality results.

As to the "e," if the jaws are too close, thin, reedy tone prevails.

In dealing with "u," the pleasant, smiling expression of the face is helpful. It brings the features into that play which realises the

perfect mechanism of the natural vocalism required.

Take, for example, the word "beauty.' Beauty is associated with the light-heartedness of joy. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." The mouth with corners depressed by pathetic expression can never realise the fulness of joy which beauty inspires. The smiling position sends out buoyant silvery tone in rings which pulsate through space, leaving an impression delicate and fanciful in the extreme. Such treatment finds ready response in the hearts and minds of the audience.

A listener of discrimination will soon ascertain the necessary positions of the mouth I have suggested, and be able to assist the student. It should be remembered that a pupil cannot himself perfectly distinguish the peculiarities of his own tone.

I may here briefly remind the singer that:

The vowel "o" is unfinished without its final "oo."

"A," in the long sound, demands as its final the sound of "e," as in "me."

The terminal of "i" is "e," as in "eat."

I cannot too emphatically warn students against prolonging these finishing elements. They are FINALS, and should be employed to cut the dominating sound, with the deftness the shears demonstrate in severing a thread.

Britons are frequently inaccurate in the treatment of the letter "h." By way of parenthesis I feel bound to say why much of this uncertainty prevails. It mainly hinges on the treatment of the preceding vowel. Take the words, "the horse." Too frequently those who ill-treat the "h" give the long sound of "e" in the word "the," and then attempt to aspirate the "h" in "horse." It is well-nigh impossible. After the long sound of the "e" the speaker or the singer will drop the "h," whereas if he give the short sound of "e" he will find no difficulty arising in connection with the aspirate. Therefore, make it a rule where the "h" is required, to precede it by the short sound of the vowel.

In dealing with words commencing with a

vowel, the above rule must sometimes be reversed. For instance, take "The orange." "E" in "the" must be long. The same law governs in "The emerald."

ENUNCIATION—CONSONANTS

ALTHOUGH the vowels, being the tone-bearers, are the principal vocalists of the alphabet, still, the consonants exert vital influence upon the tone-picture. The consonant has a twofold capacity. It not only sketches the outlines of illustrative words, but vignettes and softens the stronger vowel colours, adding those delicate gradations of tone which strengthen the perspective and throw up the extreme lights and shades.

The consonant is generally accepted as toneless. To me, many of them convey vocal tints of wondrous lustre.

Take "l," as an example, in the word "bell." The pulsations of this final, when effectively treated, add just the delicate waves of distinctive sound that give sensations of reality to the expressive word. To secure the effect, the tip of the tongue must be pressed firmly to the gums over the upper teeth so long as the

humming tone is desired. At the same time, the quality may be rendered more silvery and bell-like if the lips are stretched as in laughter, with the mouth opened so as to raise slightly the corners of the upper lip. Alternately opening and closing the mouth-cavity, whilst the tongue remains in the same position, will add effective vibration in waves of sound, which, though soft, delicately permeate the largest room.

Many vocalists experience difficulty with "l" as an introductory consonant—as in the word "lo!" Frequently one hears this sung "ul-lo!" (with the added syllable "ul"). It occurs because they commence the consonant before the tongue-tip reaches its proper position, and when the tongue is placed they retain the sound of the "l" instead of passing instantly from it to the "o," which must find the mouth rounded and fixed immovably in the proper position.

Again, they attempt to sing loudly the "l" instead of humming it. Consonants should be enunciated softly. It must be remembered

they are in the one case but preparations for the vowel sound; in the other, the tapered close.

What can be more objectionable than the loud hissing of the letter "s"? Where extreme breath pressure is not at fault the consonant is held too long—a common error.

The treatment of "sh," as in "shall," is liable to the same exaggeration, but may be satisfactorily interpreted on the line I have indicated for "s."

Words beginning with "w" are a constant source of difficulty to vocalists. How often we hear them precede "w," where followed by an "h," with the sound of "oo," as in "moon"! "W," in "with," demands the aspiration of the "h," as though spelt "whith." The same effect occurs in other words commencing with "w." Vocalists, as a rule, find difficulty in this aspirate. The method of its production is very simple. Place the lips in the position for "w." Next blow lightly, at an imaginary feather in the air, in a leisure fashion. Then open the lips, quickly singing

with immovable mouth the syllable "wi" (the short sound of the "i," as in "it"). Hold the "i" sound throughout the note, terminating it quickly by "th." The latter will necessitate placing the tongue-tip sufficiently near the top of the upper teeth to admit the passage of the faintly hissing breath, which is promptly checked by the close adhesion of the tongue to the upper gums. Unless the aspirate is employed in such words the delivery becomes stiff, clumsy, and uncultivated.

The word "when" is frequently delivered as a combination of "oo" and "en". It converts the word into "oo-en". By this means we lose the delicate influence of the aspirate. Such treatment robs the word and sound of the beauty it possesses.

As I have previously said, the charms of vocal tones consist of their variety and expressiveness. In this aspirate we have a distinctive sensation adding to the beauty of vocal accomplishment. Other words of a like construction are similarly and erroneously enunciated.

There need be no difficulty in giving the

perfect sound of "when" if we remember one or two simple rules. In attacking any syllable it is necessary to realise fully the principal vowel element. In doing so we find that the short sound of the "e," as in "end," is the tone for full sustenance which must be continued almost throughout the note. Then the singer should realise the nature of the introductory combination of the letters "wh". To obtain the aspirate it is but necessary to place the lips in the position I have mentioned for lightly blowing. Only a gentle force of breath is necessary. Having delivered this breath, let the lips instantly take the position which produces "we," by the short sound of the vowel, as in "wet". The vocalist blows, as it were, this short sound of "we" into the air, after which the final consonant "n" is momentarily preserved by the humming form. We thus find that this apparently single sound has three stages, thus—a waft of breath developed into the sustained short sound of "e," which in turn is concluded by the "n," with its hummed vibration.

In all sounds and words to be created by such stages, smoothness and rapidity of blending become indispensable to neatness of expression. The elements must be so fluently united that the stages are not apparent to the listener. The delicacy of all aspirates should be preserved, as they are not expected to become tone bearers—merely the vehicles of certain necessary sensations which perfect the concrete whole.

In the word "whether" we have a minor and major aspirate (in the proportionate sense), each acquired by different technical means. Whilst the introductory "wh" results from a looser, more delicate breath against the teeth, for the final syllable the heavier breath is checked on "th" by placing the tip of the tongue over the teeth to give a thicker sensation.

The operations of the breath on "wh" and "th" are not similar. The former has the lighter flow of wind, with tongue flat in the mouth. "Th" conveys two impressions; for example: "th" as in "think," "th" as in

"those." The position of the tongue is not quite the same in both cases; "th" in "those" requires little aspirate. The attack of the latter is of the check-breath order, and necessitates firm pressure of the tongue against the upper teeth; whilst on the thinner "th" the tongue barely touches the teeth.

The "r" at the end of "whether" should be neatly turned by a light upward brush of the tongue's tip towards, but not touching, the upper teeth and the roof of the mouth, which it lightly touches, only to become instantly separated from the latter in order to finish the word.

The tongue finds much employment in dealing with consonants. In the treatment of vowels it has no duty but that of self-immolation. It should lie naturally in the base of the mouth-cavity, with its tip well towards the teeth. It is not good, however, for a student to be too frequently reminded of his tongue, otherwise nervous apprehension with regard to that member will cause him to play all sorts of tricks. If the singer attain a habit of

easy expiration of the breath, his tongue will instinctively take a sympathetic and natural position.

When a fault of any kind is pointed out in the student, and methods of correction suggested, the singer in his anxiety will often go to extremes, endeavouring to combat the disadvantage. It is always better, therefore, to under-draw any innovation, trusting to the judgment of the teacher, warranted by experience, for a correct medium. So strong is this tendency in anxious students that when a slightly softer tone is recommended, the pupil passes instantly to the other extreme. It is, therefore, important to preserve as a fixed rule the habit of slight or gradual changes.

The consonant "t" is obtained by firm pressure of the tongue's tip on the gums of the upper teeth. In releasing the "t," the mouth must instantly assume the correct position the vowel requires.

PROVINCIALISMS

IT may seem an easy matter to arrive at the perfect pronunciation of vowels when we have so many guiding principles before us. It is not so. Provincial influences are constantly at work to thwart us. Conversational English is full of errors, unnatural and misleading. In all grades of society we find affectations, amounting to distortion of pure English. Every shire is inclined to claim the purest development of diction, whereas not one has arrived at perfect pronunciation through any of its social groups.

In some fashionable circles we hear "been" pronounced with the drawling sound of the long "e," whilst the true pronunciation is "bin." "Were" is uttered as "wear" instead of "wur." Crossing to America we find New Yorkers pronouncing "can't" (the abbreviation of cannot) with the sound of the "a," as in "cap," drawn out; whilst Bostonians

employ the long "a," as in father. Western States present their own peculiarities of speech. In all countries, all communities, provincialisms have to be reckoned with.

The pronunciation of the South imparts a thin sound to the vowels; whilst that of the North illustrates the other extreme, represented by very broad, even coarse tone. There is, however, a happy medium, which must be accepted as correct.

It has long been the fashion to denounce English as a musical language. The admitted superiority of the Italian, with its open influences, has encouraged many people to look upon English as a wretched medium for musical expression. There are those who hold contrary opinion, and their judgment is based upon the experience of long investigation. In this somewhat limited company I rejoice to find myself. The English language is capable of both broad and delicate musical distinctions in enormous variety. The British mind is not so unimaginative and unimpressionable that it may not grasp the marvellous and even

beautiful significance of many English words and phrases. Each has its point, is understood and appreciated by the people. The reputation of the English tone has suffered mainly through its ill-treatment by vocalists. So many of them have failed to realise the true expressive elements of the words they profess to sing, that innumerable fine distinctions have been lost. As a consequence, corresponding degeneration of tone quality has resulted.

As an instance of Northern tendencies in pronunciation, I would point out how broadly some of the vowels are delivered. The proper pronunciation of "man" has the short sound of the "a," as in "hat." The Yorkshireman out-Herods Herod by even going beyond the long "a," as in "father," frequently converting the original sound into "mon." This is not only a fault of pronunciation, but it begets a quality of tone which, though full-sounding (in the thick sense), lacks the varied, finished effect of refined utterance. To sing the vowel in that way tends to confine the tone at the

back of the mouth, to render a thick consistency, and to impede the freest passage of the breath. The sound-cavity of the mouth is condensed by the jaws, cheeks, and lips, and the vocal effects lack PURE sonority and delicacy. Such method has a derogatory influence upon that pliancy of the lip which makes for variety of vocal tone and delicate sensibility.

The provincialisms of speech in the south of England induce thinner tones. Though inclined to brilliancy, the purity of their quality is affected by reediness, which becomes disquieting, because sustained. American tone is often nasal. All these defects may be corrected mainly by proper regard to mouth position and lip management. I shall attempt later to give examples, but, though they serve as rules, the latter must at times be slightly modified by the teacher to meet the demands of variously constructed faces. Differently shaped mouths need diverse management. The voice builder, therefore, must not only understand the mechanics of voice production,

but be sensitive, impressionable, and inventive, in order that he may at once deal with each difficulty as it arises. The more resourceful and inventive a teacher, the more he is ever learning. The greatest master has never succeeded in exhausting the illimitable stores of vocal knowledge.

Even when Yorkshire provincials attempt to pronounce the shorter sound of the "a" in "man," they have the utmost difficulty in obtaining even the approximate sound. Neither can they produce readily the shorter sound of the "e." Let a Yorkshireman, for instance, sing in his own way "men," and he will produce practically the impression of "man" correctly pronounced. Because I use the term "provincial" it must not be assumed that the diction of London or any other metropolis is perfect. In London the peculiarities of the Cockney speech are often present, and it has not even the substance which the Northern faults give to vocal tone. The Northern quality is frequently called "breadth." I prefer to style it "thickness." Listen to the

Cockney utterance of "candle." It becomes "ke-n-dle," with the short sound of the "e" long drawn out to a thin, reedy tone. Londoners of cultivation are not free from these and similar influences. "Candle," of course, should preserve the vowel sound, as in "hat." Many in the North would employ the long sound of "a," as in "father."

The correct sounds of all vowels must be obtained by technical means most applicable to the peculiarities of the student.

"SLURRING"

ONE of the most disastrous and slovenly habits is "slurring." I use the term in contradistinction to the glide known as the "portamento." "Slurring" I define as exaggerated "portamento"—so exaggerated as to become irritating. This fault may result either from lack of vocal fluency or proper breath control. In either case the singer should devote much study to the mastery of attack and the legato. The latter is the preparation for the true "portamento."

THE LEGATO

THERE is no slurring in the legato; yet note follows note, smoothly, steadily, unerringly. Interval melts into interval. In the flow of melodic succession borne upon the current of sustained breath, there is no discordant element to distract. Like the faint currents of the stately stream, these notes are but an integral part of the great, harmonious flow. There is no isolation of note, no assertiveness. The rhythmic pulse is derived only from that mighty motive source—the breath-current.

Of all styles in vocalism, the legato is the most grateful, comforting, artistic. It should become the dominant influence.

This vocal movement is dependent upon steady breath pressure, so steady as to become unemotional.

It is the organ tone of the voice. The difficulty a student encounters in acquiring this delivery is to present each succeeding note

with a smoothness which is absolutely unimpassioned. There must be no perceptible click, or hitch, in attacking the successive intervals. They should evolve as smoothly and brilliantly as the iridescent soap bubbles from a clay pipe, undetached in their development. It requires no spasmodic pressure of breath, but, on the other hand, is more akin to the almost imperceptible action of the swift crescendo delivery. Not a vestige of the "drag" or "slur" must appear.

In the true legato it will be noticed that the breath is ever steadily flowing, even when apparently the tone would seem to be silent. It is the after-vibrations of sonorous sounds that fill what would otherwise appear as gaps in the continuity of tone.

It may become necessary in certain legato passages to emphasise certain notes. This may be done by the sudden increase of breath-pressure, but even here care must be observed to retain continuity of flowing tone.

I must again point out that, in sounding the softest passage, the ever-moving force of

breath should continue. The soft cadence which has not this steady, even, swift flow of breath will be absolutely toneless or colourless. It is a common error of vocalists to weaken the pressure of breath in attempting a quiet tone. Whatever the power of the note demanded, the passage of breath must never be intermittent or faltering. Cultivating the legato style, this principle must be recognised. In presenting a vocal work of many moods, the inevitable law of compensation must be borne in mind. Where the crisp attack of the staccato prevails, for the observance of this compensation, which Nature demands, every opportunity should be seized for the employment of the legato for the sake of that contrast which heightens the effect of both styles and preserves the rendering from colourless monotony.

Church choirs employ the legato vocalisation, but as this style is so largely unemotional it has been dubbed by musical people of more dramatic taste as "Sunday-schooly," and perhaps not without reason. The requirements

of contrast necessitate something more—even in devotional music—than a succession of flowing musical sentences unvaried by the pulsations which come of strong convictions. The "drating" intonations of prayers is apt to influence the musical services of the Church of England. Such dispassionate delivery is unconvincing. It has its derogatory influence on the concert platform and in general chorus work, and is to be regretted from many points of view. Its saving grace is that it becomes more or less a preparation for the invaluable legato quality, especially when free from "slurring."

ARPEGGIOS

ARPEGGIOS should be practised slowly at first, to attain evenness. In a rapidly ascending group of six notes the first must be delicately "felt" (not over-emphasised), and the rule is to increase the power, sometimes the pace, of the upward group, gradually diminishing the power on the last two notes, so as to touch delicately the highest note in passing. In descending, the first of the group should be "felt" (slightly marked by stronger breath), and the remainder flow gradually softer. The proper interpretation will suggest the ease and flow natural to confident facility. A laboured arpeggio cannot illustrate the true form. The true legato must induce the feeling of easy, leisured grace; not that the rhythmic flow is disturbed, the object is to dispel any semblance of trepidation arising out of that anxiety born of uncertainty. Like any other decorative figure, it must, as a rule, be treated lightly—as a mere adjunct of the principal melodic movement.

THE APPOGGIATURA

THIS, the simplest of all embellishments, is a note foreign to the harmony, and has really no time value. It is a passing note on which the voice slightly leans. It is generally given its full value in writing. The succeeding melody note is indicated at the value both unitedly possess. The length of the appoggiatura must be deducted from the succeeding melody note. In duple time the appoggiatura takes half the value indicated by the next note, and in triple time about two-thirds. The duration, however, may vary with the character of the phrase. The appoggiatura note enters on the beat, has the accent, and may represent any interval.

THE ACCIACCATURA

THE acciaccatura is a quick little passing note which precedes, by a semitone, or tone, a longer note. As the term means "crushed note," it is hardly necessary to point out how evanescent it really is in character. It must, therefore, be but delicately suggested.

THE MORDENTE

THIS ornament presents a group of two or three rapid little notes, preceding a longer melody note by a semitone or full tone. Like all other rapid passages, it should be practised slowly and evenly at first. Finally, it must be executed with that nonchalance, but extreme lightness and facility, which realises the perfection of easy grace. The first note should be delicately "felt." The term "felt," in the sense I now employ it, suggests that which can hardly be conveyed by any other word. It does not signify an accent in the general acceptation of the term. It implies the slightest pressure of breath or "hold" upon the first note of a group which will convey the suspicion of an accent without disturbing the proportionately uniform flow of tone.

THE TURN

SUNDRY considerations are to be borne in mind relative to the "turn." In the first place, it should be remembered that a "turn" is but a passing embellishment, forming no part of the melodic or rhythmic structure. Occupying this position, it should be treated accordingly. Many vocalists encumber it with such wind force as to convey heaviness amounting to clumsiness. The base, or foothold, as it were, is found in the melodic note preceding it, and the resolution is the succeeding tone of the melody. Whilst both of these call for a slight feeling of emphasis, the three intervening grace notes of the "turn" must be lightly and deftly executed without disturbing the rhythm of the melody. If the singer possess herself of the idea that these little notes are to be done upon the humming model, she will naturally acquire the requisite delicacy and facility of expression.

THE TRILL

THE trill, or "shake," as it is often termed, is the rapid alternate execution of two notes separated by an interval of a tone or semitone. The shake begins with the auxiliary note, and often opens slowly, taking speed gradually. There are no accents in the shake. To acquire a perfect trill, each note must possess the same power, length, quality of tone, and satisfy to the fullest extent the sense of proportion. The difficulty of perfecting the shake depends not so much upon the rapidity of execution as upon the perfect balance in all respects of the notes employed. With a view to the cultivation of this element, it is necessary to practise the notes of a trill, or shake, at first very slowly and evenly. Progression in speed must only be attempted so long as perfect balance is preserved. The oscillation of notes should become so rapid as almost to conceal the vocal process. I cannot

emphasise too strenuously the necessity of maintaining the perfect uniformity of all the elements comprised in the two notes, and their manner and length of movement. Any disparity in any of the conditions will act as a disturbing sensation sufficient to prevent the perfect realisation of the trill. The student may learn much from the shakes of the violin virtuoso, though varying efficiency will be noticed now and again amongst leading artistes. Kubelik's shakes are about the most technically perfect I have heard, and his double-stopping in slow and rapid movements teaches the vocalist much in the way of tone balance and proportion. With practice the student will find the trill, given a steady flow of breath and an unrestrained throat, work its own perfections.

FORCING RANGES

MANY teachers are tempted to satisfy the aspirations of their pupils for higher or lower notes. To the neglect of intermediary parts of the voice, they concentrate, through high or low songs, or exercises, upon extreme notes. They may or may not succeed. In any case they weaken or change the character of the intermediate tones with chaotic results. Students should curb their impatience and be content to equalise the qualities of their range and accept that development of scale which comes naturally, without disturbing the proportionate balance of their best notes. It is the habit of forcing basses into baritone songs, contraltos into mezzo, baritones to tenor heights, which has resulted, at the present time, in a paucity of pure basses, contraltos, and tenors. Verily it has become the age of nondescripts.

Stock-songs are to a great extent responsi-

ble for many of these results. The business-like song writer or publisher recognises that if his composition is to have a large sale it must be adapted to the range of the nondescripts, who are in the overwhelming majority. The forcing process for the distinctive vocalist is the natural result of these unnatural conditions. Firm concentration of attack will often work wonders on high notes, but the pupil should not be aware of the precise altitude, otherwise his courage may fail, and then all sorts of strange things will occur.

A "running jump" is ever more efficacious than the hesitating contemplation of what is regarded as an obstacle.

HIGH NOTES

DO not be tempted to take high notes with excessive power. As the vocalist runs up the scale he must remember that each succeeding note becomes shorter and shorter in its vibration; therefore, it is folly to try and give to these elevated tones the same breadth easily obtainable on the deeper notes of the voice.

Sing high notes softly as a rule, with just sufficient power to preserve the clearest, best, and most compact quality.

The carrying power of high notes is quite sufficient to equalise the proportionate character of the vocal scale.

"CHEST" AND "HEAD" TONES

THE terms "chest" and "head," as applied to tones, are fallacious. They are used to define certain vibratory sensations experienced in the production of given sounds.

The vibrations of deep notes cause a portion of the anatomy to quiver, as it were. One feels a sensation deep in the chest.

The higher, or so-called "head" tones, are apparently reflected by the head cavities. Hence the respective terms.

The vocal stream, notwithstanding, follows but one course. Nature, unimpeded, plays no tricks. It is governed by unalterable laws.

TONE FAULTS

THE vocal fault does not exist which may not be overcome by natural methods. Unsatisfactory qualities of tone are generally produced by contortions of the face, imperfect breath management, or some disturbance of the vocal mechanism. Whilst it is easy to account for faults, it becomes most difficult to explain with the pen the processes by which they may be converted into virtues. There are sundry failings I have not yet touched, however, which I will endeavour to analyse, and at the same time suggest methods of rectification.

As I have already said, no two voices may be treated precisely alike; therefore, good results must of necessity be sought by devious courses, all, however, directed towards the attainment of easy, natural delivery. No effort should be required in singing—that is to say, such effort as produces in the minds of the

hearers a feeling that the vocalist is labouring under difficulties. I have already explained why tones become reedy, viz., through nearly closed teeth. There is a great similarity between reedy and nasal tones. The quality may become reedy without acquiring the nasal thickness. In the latter case the sensation is suggestive of a block in the nostrils, such as one experiences with a bad head-cold. The thick nasal sound generally arises from the sensations of vibration which seem to occur in the passage from the throat to the nose. The breath is then going the wrong way. In such instances forward production is necessary, which may be stimulated by proper attack and the steady flow of the breath. The explosive attack will often concentrate the tone at the right point. Check-breath attack will have a similar effect. The swift crescendo attack in some cases may correct the fault. The object should be to acquire that attack and position of the lips which will result in the vibration occurring in the middle of the mouth. In that case the undesirable influence of the

teeth and throat may be avoided. Experiments will result in the discovery of the purest quality, when note should be taken of the precise mouth position and the necessary balance of breath to realise the desired tone effect.

Often the light, vapid quality is occasioned by the aperture created with the lips being too open. The tone is then scattered. This opening may be gradually contracted until the requisite fulness or concentration is attained. A very simple method of giving solidity, solemnity, or pathos to a thin, bright, or scattered tone is to draw in the mouth-corners until the appropriate vocal mood is realised. By a reversion of this process a thick quality may be converted into a clear, bright, even brilliant note.

One of the most objectionable vocal faults is the asthmatical or breathy note. This is occasioned by indifferent breath management. Too much wind is then employed, and it appears to move in advance of the tone, instead of acting as a balance or support to the note.

There is a toy consisting of a tube and a very light ball. By blowing gently through this tube the ball may be kept at a given altitude.

Now, this appears to me to illustrate what is necessary in the way of breath management. A steady flow of wind from the lungs should keep the note sustained at the requisite quality. If more breath is employed than is required, the escape of wind is noticeable in asthmatic results. Often one hears this breathy character in attack. It becomes essential in such cases to resort to the check breath rather than an "explosive" which directs the larger volume of wind suddenly on the note. When by the check breath the requisite quality is secured, then the flow of wind should remain at that force which preserves the initial and best quality of tone.

It will be observed that in a long holding note the first portion, which is supported by the strenuous flow from the full lungs, is of superior quality. As the wind-flow diminishes, the character of the note deteriorates. This

is sufficient to suggest to the vocalist the importance of equal breath application. When the lungs approach exhaustion the flow of breath must be more rapid to attain the forceful influence.

Throaty delivery is the result of a production too far back in the mouth, or it may be occasioned by a gripping of the throat, which prevents the tone coming forward to the middle of the mouth. Throatiness, therefore, is the result of bad breath management and physiological contortion. If the singer master free and comfortable delivery there will be no contortions, no distressing results, either for the hearer or the singer.

We sometimes notice a quality of voice suggestive of the deeper engine whistle. It is generally called a "head tone." This is often occasioned by extravagant breath, or by the mouth being too much closed on such vowel sounds as "oo" in "mood." The lips should be opened rather wider until this sensation vanishes, when it will be found that the note vibrates forward in the mouth, not on the

closed lips, which suggest the head quality. Inaccurate pronunciation will force the mouth into the wrong positions, interfere with the free passage of breath, and render it impossible to produce pure tone.

Striking under a note (scooping) creates indifferent quality.

Any lapse of mouth position may be at once detected by the sound emitted. If the vocalist is sufficiently observant he cannot fail to detect unconscious movement of the lips by the tone result. The teacher, of course, has the advantage of being able to hear more readily such occurrences. Every movement of the lip position means something. By studying its significance the work of the teacher and pupil becomes easier.

I have strenuously abstained from entering upon scientific theories relating to voice production, for the simple reason that, although much has been written, little has been deduced that is beyond dispute, or that is really useful in voice building and cultivation. To encumber the pupil with scientific propositions is to

fog and obscure his mind so that he is unable to grasp the few and simple, but all-important principles which govern natural voice production.

At the risk of reiteration I will point out that the chief of these comes under "facial influence," and is mouth position.

For example: When "a," as in "hay," is sung with the mouth nearly closed, the tone sounds on the teeth. If the mouth is too open it occurs back on the palate. The best interpretation is realised when the singer opens his mouth to just that position which causes him to feel the tone in the middle of the mouth, where most resonance is acquired. From this illustration it will be seen how efficiently facial expression governs mouth position, and the latter, in turn, determines tone quality The breath, of course, has its influence. Other aids I refer to in their proper places.

THE VIBRATO

THE vibrato, or wobble, as I prefer to term it, is the most disastrous of all vocal faults. An occasional tremor of the voice in pathetic passages may be regarded as permissible. It does not affect the intonation. By tremor I mean that faltering delivery of the voice squarely upon the note, which lends the faintest suggestion of agitation. The vibrato, on the other hand, often describes such wide and undecisive intervals as to render true intonation impossible. The fault grows. The vibrato in time leaves the vocalist incapable of that sustaining power necessary for complete command of voice. Through its use the once restful legato becomes a delirious conglomeration of discordant sounds. The music loses all feeling of rhythm, proportion, and emotional significance. Clear attack becomes impossible. Faults are more easily acquired than virtues. I have seen the bad example of a singer of

reputation work havoc in the vocal strata of the generation. The unavoidable quavering of a once celebrated artiste who had become so *passé* as to be bereft of sustaining power, has afflicted many young and otherwise promising vocalists.

For stringed instruments requiring the bow the vibrato is an advantage. The tremolo stop in the organ is beautiful. But in the latter case it would become irritating if used otherwise than sparingly and for transient effects. The violinist is careful not to overdo the vibrato. The singer who is addicted to the mannerism, however, is rarely able to produce a steady, sustained note, and thus becomes incapable of varied expression.

As I write, an article lies before me upon this subject, in reference to which I will offer a few observations. The arguments contained therein have a tendency towards justification of the "wobble." Call it vibrato, tremolo, or what you will, the most direct, expressive phrase for employment in this case is the "wobble." Instead of throwing light upon the

vexed question, the article so disregards the fundamental principles of sound as to create in the mind of the student the unrest of misapprehension. I will take one sentence: "Has it ever occurred to them" ("those people who rave and write against the vibrato") "that if they heard a vocal tone without the slightest wave or pulsation in it they would be the first and the loudest to condemn it?" Herein we have a grave misconception. "The vocal tone without the slightest wave or pulsation in it!" No such tone was ever produced, because, in every sound, whether sustained or otherwise, there are "waves" or "pulsations." The two elements are inseparable—one cannot exist without the other. I do not like the term "sound wave," but prefer the appellation "rings" as being more in accordance with the globular structure of all effective sounds. Whether in the science of light or sound we must recognise there are certain radiations or emissions of the ring shape. Drop a pebble on the surface of a placid lake and you will see a demonstration of the natural form to which

I allude, in successive rings of waves and undulations. Light radiates in this unalterable order. Sound travels in just such shapes, as it were. Tones perfectly attacked are symmetrically and rhythmically rounded, otherwise they become mere scattered vibrations of various conflicting elements. Such we term noises. Even the straight, so-called pulseless tone takes this form, and has its inevitable vibrations or sound rings; but there is a wide difference between the sensations produced by a perfectly rounded, steady note, and that tone which, being without proper consonant preparation and ending, loses its undulatory symmetry. The purity of the note depends upon the sustenance of the main vowel sound, which succeeds the preparatory and ends with the final consonant. In each of these three elements one must encounter varying tone sensations or impressions, but when they are blended in symmetrical proportion we have the completely rounded vocal mass, giving off its more brilliant emanations. Pulsations of steady tones are acquired, firmly on the note,

only by proper breath management. The throb, still on the note, attained by this means is convincing and true to pitch. That so-called pulsation derived from the "wobble" describes varying intervals and frequently ends depressed in pitch. The constant employment of this "wobble" renders the vocalist unable to preserve a steady legato tone. Sustained as the latter may be, it is not so colourless as some writers would have us believe. The natural, as opposed to the exaggerated, vibrations are to be found in the steadiest note. Like the pebble upon the pond, it sends out its ever-expanding rings, which, of course, weaken in distance, as all forces do. The writer I have alluded to omits altogether to point out how largely pronunciation and enunciation contribute to the vital pulsations of tone quality. It is through perfect pronunciation and enunciation we arrive at the graceful and natural evolution of vocal sounds. The sustained vowel of a note presents the compact glow of the planet. The preparatory and final consonants illustrate the radiations

of brilliancy emitted in the reflected rays from the planets in circular form. The sustained note is the centre of tone power, from which the more brilliant, evanescent elements spring. A scattered tone can never acquire that comforting sustenance arrived at by means of correct breath management, which causes the tone to stand forth with the beauty, symmetry, and relief of a well-cut cameo. The "wobble," or "vibrato," is fatal in its indecisiveness, its scattered tone. The fault of which I complain would perhaps be better defined if it were termed "tremolo." The tremolo of the organ is arrived at through two separate pipes tuned at slightly different pitches. It is the discordant oscillation of two distinct pitches passing through one final outlet. In the organ we have mechanical accuracy, which renders the effect less unsatisfactory. In the human application of the idea we have not that strict adherence to pitch, for the reason that in the "wobble" the various intervals are seldom of precisely the same nature. What may be a "tremolo" in the organ will prove a

"wobble" through the human voice. A trill we can understand, because it is an oscillation between two defined, unalterable notes; but the "wobble" produces neither a slow trill nor the true tremolo of the organ pipes. It is an irresponsible, irritating sensation, expressive neither of agitation, trepidation, nor dramatic tension. It is but the hysteria of conflicting pitches and irrational moods. The writer ends thus: "How absurd it would be to claim that the fan in the reed-organ changed the fundamental pitch at the reed by fanning it?" In answer to that: We do not get by the action of the fan the true effect originally produced by the reed. The fanning process diverts the application of the tone column, scatters the tone, which suffers depressions or expansions that, at a distance, give the oscillations of two distinct pitch sensations.

When a vocalist becomes addicted to the vibrato he has difficulty in attacking the first note, particularly of a soft passage. The breath has become so unmanageable that it cannot poise a restful tone. The flow of

breath becomes unnatural, therefore contrasts illustrative of varied expression are impossible. The singer acquires a hard, unbending mouth, which induces a constrained delivery in one set mood, admitting of little variety by way of emotional tone. What would a musician think of an organist who constantly employed the tremolo stop? This should convince vocalists of the undesirability of acquiring a habit which must, eventually, be ever-present, however disturbing to the required mood.

THE SCOOP

WHERE indifferent attack is prevalent, a singer is often heard to approach the first note of a phrase by means of the "scoop": that is, striking a little under and "slurring" up to the note. Such method is bad form. Yet there are very rare occasions when it is necessary to suggest a pathetic mood, demanding that pathos conveying weariness or lassitude. Then it may be permissible to strike slightly under and glide faintly up to the note. I do not advise such liberties, but if employed the under attack must be very faint, and atoned for by a steadier flow of breath full on the pitch of the melodic note. If the "slur" is exaggerated the effect becomes common and suggestive of uncultivation. Such hazardous expedients, therefore, must be treated with extreme care and delicacy. It is possible to obtain almost the precise mood by a slow crescendo attack squarely on the note, yet I have known instances wherein departure from the legitimate path has been fairly justified by results.

OPEN "E"

"A'S" and "e's" do not necessarily demand a nearly closed mouth. They can be perfectly realised by well-opened lips. When the mouth is too cramped the inside of the upper lip does not sufficiently cling to the teeth to prevent the breath escaping through the interstices between the teeth with reedy effect. By opening the mouth the lips become stretched over the teeth, preventing the escape of breath save by its proper channel, and a more resonant sound results. If the open mouth do not quite give the acute sound of the "e" throughout the note, all the better, because this quality can be applied by way of a brief final suggestion.

OPENING NOTES

WHEN a vocal passage commences on the last or unaccented note of the bar let it be sung gently, otherwise the vocalist will not be prepared for the first of the succeeding bar, which almost invariably demands emphasis of some kind, whether "explosive," check breath, or breath pressure. The rhythmic balance is destroyed if the opening, unaccented tone become too loud.

Before commencing any song ascertain its mood, and imbue the mind with the exact temperament. Feel the mood, and the appropriate technical method will come spontaneously.

FIXED POSITION

AT times vocalists may find occasional notes difficult to sustain or execute with the best quality preserved. In that case something is wrong either with the mouth position, breath management, or pronunciation. To overcome the difficulty, sustain the vowel sound of the word or syllable by that fixed position of the mouth which affords the best tone. The mere act of this concentration will cause the breath to flow naturally, steadily, possibly swiftly, in order to maintain the note at a fixed power and quality. By attention to this vowel sound all temptation to move the lips through anticipating final consonants will be overcome.

I have said that a natural flow of breath will do wonders towards execution and tone quality. This concentration on the vowel sound induces a steady flow of breath that will carry succeeding notes with ease.

The same principle applies to execution. Take the sustained note which generally occurs before a rapid run. If this long note is not sustained by fixed positions, the breath will falter. On the other hand, if the note is held firmly, the flow of breath, unconsciously employed in this process, will create the necessary current by which the run may be executed with facility and ease.

Whilst the greater portion of this preliminary, sustained note is delivered with power, its close should be gradually tapered to the delicacy demanded for the flexible delivery of the succeeding run.

One notices the absence of sense of proportion even in expert violinists. The player will too often allow the first touch of the downward bow to acquire a strength out of all character with that which is realisable by the weaker end or direction of the bow. Such disparity should be a warning to the vocalist.

TO LOCATE MOUTH POSITION:

BROADENING OR BRIGHTENING TONE

THE extended or smiling position of the lips when employed for a bright or brilliant note, often induces a thin tone. When this position is preserved throughout the note it leaves the impression of something wanting. Now, the lightest quality needs a certain amount of tone foundation. In such cases it is well, sometimes, to attack even these bright notes with the mouth-corners slightly drawn to give the full and solemn foundation quality in attack. Then gradual mouth extension to the smiling position causes the note so to develop as to leave a final suggestion of brilliancy. I have emphasised the necessity of a fixed position of the mouth throughout a sustained note where one emotional quality is desired. The method I have just described, however, applies to particular cases, and is no

real violation of the general rule. It is bad vocal form to execute a crescendo on a single note by gradually opening the mouth perpendicularly. Such a habit induces bad attack, drags out and alters the quality of the tone. It does not realise steady, sustaining effect. By breath pressure alone should vocal power be intensified, the mouth assuming, all the while, a fixed position. The lips must not be nearly closed, even for a very soft note. Such expedients are mere trickery.

A "scattered mouth" will produce a scattered tone. By this I mean a mouth which, whilst well open, is twitching, or on the move so as to change continually the aperture of the lips. A quick and simple way of consolidating a tone is to associate in the mind the word "awful" with the mood required. A person in speaking of something very solemn will often say, "It is awful!" Just think what the term implies. "Awe" suggests solemnity. To utter the word the mouth must be contracted at the corners, and the features generally made to assume positions illustrative of

the sentiment. Let the singer who is producing too thin a tone fly at once to the facial position appropriate for the sound of "awe," and the necessary concentration of tone will instantly result. Make it a rule, then, mentally to associate in this way expressive words with certain facial positions indicative of required moods. The exact position of the mouth necessary to escape the tone-fault will instantly occur to the singer. The teacher has but to name the word which gives the position, and the pupil knows at once what is required.

NERVOUS DISTURBANCES

I HAVE been asked over and over again the best beverage for a singer. My answer has invariably been, "There is none." As a rule, the more a person drinks, the thirstier he becomes. The less he imbibes, the more sufficient is the natural moisture of the mouth. I have always found that when the throat and mouth are dry a few sips of clear cold water has had a satisfactory result. To prove this, the singer before commencing a song need only take a sip or two of water (not a drink). He will find that it is sufficient to render the glands flexible and that his tone will acquire something of liquid quality impossible with a dry mouth. Where natural production comes one finds little difficulty with regard to dryness or abnormal secretions of moisture. Extreme nervousness will often occasion a watery mouth, which becomes very troublesome, because it necessitates swallowing at a most

critical moment. The repose which arises from easy natural production guards against these little influences born of a too nervous temperament. But to come back to the starting-point, the less a vocalist takes in the way of liquids the more he will preserve the natural conditions of the mouth. It will be an inducement to singers to retain a composed mind when I point out that nervousness either induces temptation to cough, or, on the other hand, to swallow the superfluous moisture begat by a disturbed or anxious mind.

Singers should not smoke, as it creates dryness of the mouth and throat.

EQUALISING THE RANGE

NO voice can be said to have been properly developed which does not present what I may call a uniform scale: that is to say, a tone throughout the whole range of the voice which presents no marked discrepancies in the character of its general quality.

One hears, particularly in contraltos, unpleasantly marked contrasts of tone between certain notes. The lower range is often forced to a coarse, mannish quality, followed at higher intervals by what will best be understood as a "head tone": that is to say, a light, soft quality, without the resonant *timbre* of the lower notes. Often the higher and more vapid sound becomes breathy, or contains the characteristic impression of a foggy engine-whistle.

Now, such discrepancies are occasioned by bad production, and may be obviated.

These errors of production have been, and

are still, attributed by many teachers to something they define as "registers."

I do not intend to enlighten the reader with any explanation of this theory. I have found that such a course is not only unnecessary, but attended with much disadvantage to the pupil. "Registers! registers!" have been so dinned into the ears of students that the very sound of the word has been sufficient to frighten and unsettle them. My advice, therefore, to students is to abstain from all attempt to understand this harmful theory.

There are, naturally, indifferent notes in almost every voice. When the pupil realises the necessity of proportionate quality throughout the scale he will have received sufficient reminder to attempt to equalise, again I say, proportionately, all notes of his voice. In the strict sense of the word there can be no such thing as complete uniformity of tone throughout an extended scale, but the variations through natural production become so slight as to be practically imperceptible.

One of the main reasons why I have been

led to condemn the "register" theories is that in every case it tends to create a feeling of apprehension which inevitably leads to the very results sought to be avoided. If a pupil is taught that between such and such notes of the scale there occurs a break, he will look for that break, anticipate it to such an extent as to create or foment an evil he would avoid. The vocal mechanism of the throat acts so automatically that if subjected to no interference it will do its work without assistance from the pupil.

The law of self-preservation in nature is predominant. The hedgehog will bristle, present his sharp quills at the sign of danger. The adult in falling will set his frame, harden his muscles to a tension, with the object of saving himself from the consequences of an impact. The child who has less reasoning power, fortunately, does not reason sufficiently to put his apparently protective forces into employment. The child, falls without creating much resistance in its body, and escapes uninjured; whilst the mature person comes

to grief in his attempt to avoid natural consequences. When nature is resisted by man, nature rebels, but invariably wins in the struggle.

Now, a singer, through these theories of "register," anticipating danger, employs all manner of his own agencies to combat the difficulty of discrepancy in tone. His production ceases to be natural, and he comes vocally to grief.

These disparities of tone occur more particularly in slow, sustained vocal movements. The rapidly running passage extending from the lower to the higher notes is executed with little difficulty without showing marked contrasts of quality in succeeding notes. The reason of this is that the vocalist has no time to set his forces against those of nature.

Elocution demonstrates to us how the wide ranges of tone may be accomplished without apparent break.

Take the elocutionary inflections, for instance. On a single syllable the voice will move from a deep note with lightning rapidity one to two octaves. Certainly, the quality

of what I may term, for convenience' sake, the last high "falsetto" note, is in contrast with the breadth of the deep starting tone, but the changes are so effected by rapid inflection there is no time to create a break, therefore we achieve what is practically a proportionately uniform range.

In many voices an indifferent note of quite another quality to the general scale may occur at other points than defined by the location of these registers—possibly occasioned by the utterance of a difficult word. The vocalist, however, may readily balance his tone if he will remember the inevitable law which governs all things, that is—development. He must not, because one note of his voice is powerfully resonant, use that power to the full. If the succeeding note is generally weaker, he must observe the law of compensation, which demands that the stronger note shall be modified in order to heighten the effect of the weaker tone. This will equalise the range. If the vocalist understand the proportionate qualities of his notes, he may always prepare

his passage to the weaker tone from the stronger by reducing the termination of the stronger to a softness which approximates to the quality of the succeeding, lighter sound. Here the influence of the breath is a powerful factor; but in every instance he must prepare for certain difficulties by temporising ere he reaches the weaker note or notes of his voice.

Some authorities of experience have recommended the softening of the last two heavy notes before passing to a weaker one. I have not found this always necessary. If the last deeper note is treated diminuendo, the attack of the lighter tone will not present the disagreeable contrast so thoroughly to be avoided.

Above all things, the vocalist must have confidence in himself. He should, therefore, endeavour to dismiss much thought of the weaker places in his voice and attack the notes with that confidence which alone can secure satisfactory results. We often hear, in choruses, sopranos falter at a high note. This is because they become frightened and

anticipate the difficulty, showing such fear as to weaken the effect of notes easily obtainable by them.

I have said the theory of "registers" created a bugbear. Thus I have found it. The very anticipation of danger unsettles the pupil, and destroys all feeling of confidence and security. The reason why contraltos often produce unpleasant contrasts of tone is that, as a rule, they are proud of the heavy quality of their lower notes, and in their vanity cannot abstain from forcing them to the strongest extent, even when they know lighter tones must follow, in strong contrast.

RHYTHM

WITHOUT rhythm there is no form. By this term I more particularly refer to the balance of a flowing vocal movement. I have no desire to deal here with elementary points, except as they have bearing upon finished achievements. In all musical phrases rhythmic proportion is necessary for the full realisation of the passage. In dealing with this it is necessary to remember which are the unaccented notes of the bar. Such, of course, are treated lightly; but there is a right and a wrong way of giving the requisite expression to them. The novice, when instructed to make the unaccented notes soft and subservient to the dominating tones, will relinquish control of the breath and allow the *piano* tone to fade suddenly until it retains little vestige of character. This occurs because of the sudden lapse in the breath current. The unaccented tone should be

treated as a passing note—a mere humming suggestion of the pitch which is but a preparation for transition to the fuller, accented, sound. The acme of facility in this case may be realised by slightly shortening the time of the note or softening it, so long as the transition is effected by such a disposition as will cause the hearer to feel the rhythm of the vocal figure as a whole. Clumsiness in vocal execution is often created by holding at inordinate length the unaccented or passing note. The best treatment will not permit a slavish adherence to rigid tempo. Indeed, in all emotional passages the vocalist has to "give and take," having a care, always, that in the general outline of the phrase something like rhythmic proportion is preserved.

It is a strange assertion to make, but I always feel there is nothing more unattractive than the slavish observance of strict time. To execute any passage with grace, it becomes necessary to make a distinction between accented and unaccented notes. No

rule, however, can be laid down to satisfy that instinctive feeling of graceful proportion which compensates for latitude exercised here and there.

STYLE

"STYLE" is the application of perfect technique to æsthetic requirements. The significance of the term is difficult to explain in words. In one sense there can be no stereotyped method laid down as to "style," because its demands are seldom of the same nature, and it necessitates the employment of every appropriate expedient, in turn, known to technical resource. It is the intelligent and skilful application of technique which results in the fullest illustrative vocal expression. That expression is termed "style." Vocal writing is intended to illustrate musically the significance of words. Without finished technique there can be no expression. Without expression there can be no "style."

"Style" is the product of mechanism.

If the operation of the latter be perfect, the absence of "soul" in the vocalist will not impair the result.

It is because singers endowed with no truly emotional feeling are so seldom able to appreciate the many delicate elements comprised in finished technique, that they are incapable of perfecting the technicalities of the vocal art.

As my conclusions are likely to be questioned, I may add a few further considerations.

We speak of the absence of "soul" in a vocalist's performance by way of reproach. I do not mean to discount the value of this possession. The person of refined feeling and acute sensibility to emotional paroxysm, is likely to feel much that a colder nature would fail to realise. Yet these qualities frequently beget an enthusiasm which leads to exaggeration. The moment an artiste loses control over his emotions he relinquishes command of his technical facilities. He is carried away to an exaggeration which disturbs artistic proportion. The vocalist may attain such efficiency by constant practice as to be able to execute fluently the most intricate runs. This freedom, of course, is to be desired, but it must never

result in that carelessness which prompts one to lose sight of the operation of his technique.

Not long ago, an eminent French actor expressed his views on this point, and in doing so gave an instance which occurred within his own experience. On one particular night, when acting, he was so carried away by his feelings as to weep real tears. The artiste was under the impression that he had never acted more effectively. He was surprised, therefore, when some of his critical friends asked, with grave concern, after the performance:

"Are you unwell?"

"Why?"

"Because you did not act with your accustomed strength."

Now, on the stage we know that everything must be exaggerated sufficiently to give the requisite force to a delineation. The moment this artiste was overcome by his own feelings he lapsed into a natural state with unconvincing results.

The singer, on the other hand, is apt to

either under-draw or over-intensify. In my opinion, he will not be liable to err on either side so long as he preserves his self-control sufficiently to perfect in every respect the application of his technique.

Let there be sufficient self-suppression to distinguish the emotional from the hysterical. Hysteria is unreasoning; emotion, convincing.

When a singer is carried away by super-enthusiasm, he ignores the mechanical methods requisite for the conveyance of pure emotion. His singing becomes unintelligible, and the result is weak and unsatisfying.

The singer, therefore, must never transgress the bounds of self-control.

Let us consider how some of the vocal technicalities apply to "style." Under the various heads I have said much that will suggest itself as bearing on the æsthetic side of the art, therefore little more than a summary is now required.

In considering "style" we must remember the importance of efficient breath management.

Evenly sustained expiration realises the legato.

Sudden breath pressure, of the "blast" character, approximates to the staccato attack, and adds the intensely dramatic paroxysm.

The slow, short crescendo illustrates the gentler throb of tone emotion — a mere pulsation.

The swifter crescendo describes the medium tension of impassioned delivery, appropriate for heightening a legato movement, where the "explosive" tendency would be out of character.

Facial character has its influence upon the essential elements of pronunciation and enunciation. It imparts the delicate emotional characteristics which gives illustrative force to the mood. It enables one to suggest the conflict of emotions in a single phrase. For instance, conviction may be made to follow doubt, uncertainty, hope, and end in the bright buoyancy of triumph. The facial position productive of sorrowful tone may be suddenly changed to illustrate the advent of joy.

The various moods, suggested by the words, should be thoroughly analysed and the tech-

nique most appropriate for the illustration employed. There are times when it may be admissible, even desirable, to use certain expedients not provided by ordinary technical methods,—where dramatic exigencies, for instance, call for touches of eccentric character. But such exceptional expedients should not be accentuated—merely employed as the faintest of suggestions.

Nothing, in the ordinary course, sounds worse than audible breath. Yet the panting sensation, demonstrating agitation, may, on occasions, be suggested by this means. Similar instances will occur to the dramatic singer. But in all cases avoid undue exaggeration.

That which is overdone cannot be undone.

In contrast to the legato we have the bravura style. The latter is bright and buoyant, and whilst a swift flow of breath is essential, the staccato and pronounced accents enter largely into it. Its cheerfulness renders it necessary to remember those facial expedients so suitable for this mood.

Dramatic style makes demands on the whole

range of vocal technique, and calls for some accentuation and a free employment of tone colour. The moods of a dramatic work will readily suggest the requisite methods to the analytical mind.

Regard, however, should always be paid to the environments in which the singer finds himself. Excessive force in any respect would be out of place in a small room, whilst in a large hall it becomes necessary to fit the temperament of the style to the acoustic conditions.

The vocal, as other structures, must have solidity as its fundamental element, though it be relieved by the lighter embellishments of tonal decoration. Aggressive solidity is ever depressing. The beauty of an artistic creation depends upon the perfect balance of its contributory elements. Suggestion is often more effective in tone illustration than laboured emphasis. Compensation being a dominant law of Nature, shadow accompanies light, and each has its mellowing gradations. It is a peculiarity of music as of graphic tone, that

colour effects require to be suggested, therefore made up of elements which avoid crude emphasis. This inevitable law renders the realisation of every element of pronunciation and enunciation, in complimentary proportion, necessary to artistic singing. Perfection in this respect cannot be attained without the employment of pliant lips and expressive features.

One often hears a passage requiring bold treatment torn to shreds by the employment of successive "explosive" instead of swift crescendo attacks. The attack of the note is not supported by sufficient after-flow of breath to attain carrying power. The result is scattered tone, producing uncertainty of pitch.

It always reminds me of the barking of a pup engaged in shaking a fabric to rags. Such work is hysterical, meaningless, and unconvincing, therefore it constitutes extremely bad form. A suggestion of the legato after the percussion note would produce the after-resonance so indispensable to adequate phrasing.

A composition may be sung with excellent

tone and technical efficiency, yet fail to move the audience. By applying methods I have suggested, not only will perfect pronunciation be attained, but the emotional significance of the words must become so realised as to awaken the hearer to the dramatic sense of the lines.

First impressions are usually lasting. The opening treatment of a song, therefore, often presents difficulties. Take, for example, the first two unaccented notes which lead up to the first accent of the second bar. Observe the manner in which even singers of reputation frequently attack them. They open in bad voice, with scattered and uncertain tones of unequal power. After much wavering, or hesitancy, they are able to pull themselves together on the first strong note of the succeeding bar, and their trepidation ends. But what a first impression! I will endeavour to explain some of the causes of these indifferent "openings."

In many cases they are due to absence of intelligent purpose. Failing at the onset to

imbibe the mood, to distinguish the prevailing vowel sound, to seize the most appropriate attack, such uncertainty results in irresolute mouth positions, invoking unsteadiness.

Observe the following suggestions and the course becomes easy :—

Ascertain the spirit of the opening phrase.

Note the vowel sounds and seize the facial position each demands.

Choose the attack most applicable to the mood.

Maintain steady flow of breath.

Strain not after effect.

As the story unfolds, represent in every mood and thought all that is likely to be swiftly passing in the mind of the character the vocalist represents. In doing so, have regard to the laws of proportion and compensation. Variety of appropriate treatment converts commonplace song into a work of art.

Observe faithfully the foregoing rules for the treatment of vowels and consonants.

PART SINGING

THE principles necessary for effective part singing are those upon which choruses should mainly rely as patterns of ensemble methods. Whether in duets, trios, or quartets, certain fixed rules must be observed.

In either branch of vocalism blend becomes one of the first essentials. Superiority of individual tone is of less importance than complete sympathy between the voices, both in the matter of mood and quality. To gain complete sympathy we must have uniform tone. This can only be achieved by indentical methods of breath application, facial influence, and pronunciation. These qualities combine for the production of accurate pronunciation. In sounding a single note on a given word, or syllable, the lips of the respective vocalists should assume precisely the same position, and the power should be preserved at the same strength. Any disparity in these respects will

result in various sensations destructive of perfect blend; therefore, UNITY IN ALL THINGS must be the motto of part singers. No individual member should employ his or her vocal power to the fullest extent. No peculiarity of utterance should disturb the ensemble, otherwise individual voices will stand out so aggressively as to disturb the complete balance and uniformity of tone. Where a part takes up a lead it should not be done too forcibly, unless some exceptional dramatic influence in the nature of accentuation is demanded. When a second, a third, or a fourth part unites in a movement such voices should be absorbed, as it were, in the flowing harmonious current, in order that the parts may become perfectly proportionate. In all cases of attack the same methods should be employed. Any augmentation or diminution of tone must be accomplished symmetrically and proportionately. The indispensable moods suggested by the words must be realised by complete sympathy. Herein lies the importance of identical facial expression. The pathetic de-

livery from one part, where the general feeling of the others is of brightness, will act as a disturbing element and destroy the blend. The vocalists of one part should always listen carefully to the others, in order that the same strength and expressiveness may be acquired and exaggeration avoided. Purity of tone must not be sacrificed for power. Technical efficiency is of equal importance to either the part or solo singer. Nearly everything that is applicable to the latter applies equally to those engaged in ensemble work. There is this difference, however, which must be borne in mind: crisper treatment may be necessary in the case of great bodies of vocalists. The weight of numbers induces more sustaining effect than is found in quartets. Allowance, therefore, should always be made for the vibrations of larger tone-volumes. It is under these circumstances that vocal expedients may have to be either modified or accentuated.

CHORUS METHODS

ENGLISH choruses have sometimes deteriorated because they have run in a groove. Having adopted certain old methods founded upon cramped traditions, they have failed to realise the possibilities which lie before them.

Northern choruses have won distinction for a certain solidity of tone due to the broad nature of pronunciation which is lavish in its treatment of certain vowels. If we take a London chorus we find a brilliancy, but an absence of solidity, which is attributable to the localised rendering of the English language. We go to Yorkshire to discover a certain roundness and fulness of tone which is effective in ensemble work, but it lacks the polish, the delicacy, the evanescent touches of suggestion, so to speak, of finished vocalism. Crossing the Atlantic to the American shores, we find the nasal character of speech cropping

up in choruses. Whilst certain districts or territories derive novel vocal qualities from local peculiarities of utterance, neither Yorkshire, nor the South, nor America, combines anything approximate to the perfection of tone exerted by that treatment which illustrates the delicate distinctions and purities of the English tongue. In the South we meet with the Cockney influence, which converts the short sound of "a" into a long-drawn, thin nasal tone. In Yorkshire the short sound of the "a" is given the long sound of the "a," which, though it may induce breadth of tone, does not realise the manifold qualities which give the correctness, brilliancy, finish, nor the cultivated significance to the words. We may, therefore, take it that the provincial treatment of vowel sounds has its disadvantage, because of the influence of the prevailing faults of pronunciation met in varying forms in respective districts.

There is a certain analogy between the work of chorus and solo voices. We observe a quality of tone which is excellent in its first

impression, but owing to what I call provincial influences the elements of the word are so ignored or distorted as to fail to embody the qualities which go to make up perfection of delivery. In certain cases preparation for the main vowel sound is necessary. The sustenance of that sound is essential, but the word cannot be rendered completely without the final influence. Breadth of tone becomes unsatisfying if it do not evolve by means of the final approximate vowel sound.

Just as the sound of "o" is incomplete without its final of double "o," so "a" is unsatisfactory abridged, and meaningless without its final "e." Most of the indifferent work of choruses is attributable to want of appreciation of all the true elements of a single vowel, syllable, or word.

The modern tendency for some years has been to place more value upon full, open tone than upon proper pronunciation and enunciation. The English language may have its disadvantages, but English words have significance and impressiveness to English audi-

ences, and their significance should not be disguised. So, after all, by perfect pronunciation mainly is it possible to convey such adequate emotional impressions as will give vitality to words and tone. Singing is but the musical means of interpreting words, therefore vocalism which does not perfectly realise the emotions contained in poignant words results in a meaningless and monotonous succession of sounds with but the noise and fulness to recommend them. No instrument presents such resourcefulness as the human voice, but a complete knowledge of dramatic vocal production is essential if a chorus would successfully convey emotional impressions.

The analytical study pursued by the vocal soloist is indispensable to the members of a chorus who would seek to grip the emotional subtleties the words convey. These vitalities are too frequently rendered subservient to what is erroneously looked upon as "good vocal tone."

I have no intention, in these pages, of entering further upon the details of chorus

work. Many of the foregoing chapters bear directly upon this branch of vocalism. The technicalities to which I have alluded under the heads of "Breath Management," "Pronunciation" and "Enunciation," "Attack," "The Legato," "Facial Influence," and "Style," are of equal importance to those chorus and solo singers who have ambitions beyond mere noise and crude contrasts in black and white.

OPERATIC VOCALISM

THE operatic stage offers little that is instructive to the vocal student, if I may except the multiplicity of faults it becomes necessary to avoid. By the term "operatic stage" I refer to the strenuous methods of grand opera. The public, who show little discrimination, are much to blame for those exaggerations of style which already have done so much harm to lyric drama. So long as mere noise is mistaken for dramatic vocal strength we need expect no considerable improvement in histrionic vocalism. It is urged by those engaged in opera that the requirements of the stage make such demands upon the singers as to render it impossible to confine themselves to the purer vocalism of the concert platform. This I utterly deny. Operatic artistes in the first instance have been trained upon more or less rational lines. They have thought it to their interests to depart

from legitimate spheres into the strenuous paths which make extreme demands upon the vocal organs. They forget that natural vocal methods provide adequately for all demands of emotional strength, and sooner or later—though there are brilliant exceptions—the majority are led to adopt all manner of expedients in order to obtain startling effects and keep running. This surrender of pure methods to the clap-trap demanded by an unintelligent public leads them upon a course which offers no turning. Having abandoned legitimate methods, they are led into all manner of extravagances to satiate an appetite which is ever growing. The result is: unnatural production creates difficulties, makes unusual demands on physical force, until the vocalism of the singer becomes so disorganised as to render it imperative to seize any possible means of making a superficial impression. Operatic singers temporise with the English language, endeavour to found most English syllables upon one approximate vowel sound; the result is impossibility to distin-

guish the words they are supposed to be singing. Now, even this might be suffered were it not the fact that such pronunciation relinquishes command over the voice. Thus we hear in a number of successive notes as many different methods of production, each of which follows the preceding with incongruous, even absurd results. The early adoption of the falsetto on high notes is followed by more temporising, which induces the vocalist to employ the same illegitimate means in the middle portion of the voice, where there could be no possible excuse for the method. It will often have been noticed that where the falsetto is employed, such notes are frequently followed by throaty or blatantly open tones, in marked contrast to the rest of the scale. This arises because, having relinquished the necessary grip of natural production, so many physical and facial contortions are necessary ere the better system can be resumed that we find innumerable discrepancies of quality, which often appear in ridiculous succession. Having so far departed from

natural vocal production, the physical forces must be called in, so that operatic singing becomes an effort of physical force. The natural sequence follows: the throat is seized, the jaw set, the sound cavity is confined to one mould to such an extent that even the natural progression of notes is impeded by tense, unnatural delivery. The excuse offered by operatic artistes when they commence to pay the inevitable penalty of vocal decay is—the extreme demands of grand opera. Could they but have been induced to adhere to their earlier lines of production, they would have had no complaint to make of this nature. Encouraged by the applause of an unthinking public, operatic singers are too prone to relinquish natural vocalism for an exaggeration which leads to artistic chaos. It is a case of abandoning pure technique for clap-trap, led away by an enthusiasm born of indiscriminate applause. Sims Reeves' voice lasted an inordinate length of time, but he never departed from the legitimate lines of vocal production. He was a master of style and immaculate pro-

duction. Successful alike on the concert and operatic platform, no one will venture to deny that he was capable of expressing the truest emotionalism. And why was this? Because he above other men understood that perfect pronunciation was the foundation, not only of tone, but expressive colour. His pronunciation and enunciation contained all the elements of which words were composed. His pronunciation evolved by means of accurate mouth positions, perfectly blended and sustained by the natural flow of breath. The variety of his attacks offered the fullest scope for realising necessary impressions. He reduced vocalism to a mechanical process, and from his well-digested technique never departed. If students could but realise the security which comes of the infallible application of the law of mechanics in singing, they would realise the pleasures and comforts of pure production. Operatic artistes too soon kick away the technical ladder which has raised them, and, encouraged by popular applause, soon find themselves in the throes of conflicting ex-

pedients. We often notice absence of voice control in the simplest phrases, even in turns, which now-a-days are habitually delivered by them in detached notes. With having so long relied upon physical force, it becomes difficult to sing a flowing legato figure. Fundamental laws of graceful execution become disregarded, the breath loses its pulsations, and is only spasmodic. Vocal security attempts to rely upon the most crude deliveries. Many operatic voices appear worn. The weft and the warp of the vocal fabric is seamy, because of the absence of the nap (or velvety pile), which perfect pronunciation and enunciation give to vocal material. It is not in every case that the voice is worn threadbare, but the fault of methods which aim merely at the approximate sounds of vowel pronunciation. The slightest movement of the lip or mouth in blending the elements of apparently single sounds would be sufficient in many cases to restore the bloom of the apparently worn vocal texture. I have not the space nor the time to enter more fully into the reasons of

operatic degeneracy. It would require a book of considerable length to deal with all the unsatisfactory factors which contribute towards operatic failure. With these hints, therefore, I must now content myself.

ELOCUTION

MANY of the principles I have suggested in the foregoing pages have important bearing upon the elocutionary art. Breath management, the sustenance of vowel sounds, attack, vocal movement, are amongst the technical resources which have reference to it. As this, however, is a branch of vocalism requiring special application, I must reserve the subject until I have an opportunity of dealing with it as a distinct art.

FOREIGNERS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

IT is difficult for foreigners to pronounce the English language without betraying their nationality. If they study and master the principles of pronunciation and enunciation I have suggested, they will meet with no insuperable obstacles. Foreigners find "th," "w," and other consonants difficult to deal with. If they observe and employ the mechanism I have indicated, little trouble need arise. By explaining to foreign friends the mechanical process and the elements which vowels and consonants must realise, they have speedily been able to speak and sing English with perfect purity. Even when they have thoroughly realised the stages by which certain sounds are approached they find difficulty at first in making a word or syllable flow. This occurs because they are not sufficiently rapid in blending the various

impressions. They need to study the chapter on breath management for the reason that it is through the lack of continuous forceful breath they often fail in accomplishing the facile blend.

It is almost as necessary to sustain the main vowel sound of a word in speaking as it is in singing.

VOCAL TEACHING

THE lightness of heart with which so many take up the grave responsibilities of vocal teaching is much to be deplored. Almost every pianist or organist who has acquired some knowledge of pianoforte phrasing considers himself capable of dealing with the special subjects of voice building and cultivation. There is no branch of art which requires more special training, more study and experience, than vocalism. The follower of any art who would be a specialist should devote his whole life to the particular branch he has undertaken. We know that even in orchestras "double-handed" men are regarded with some suspicion by the most competent judges. Such musicians may attain a certain amount of proficiency with two quite opposite instruments, yet, as a rule, it is a case of "Jack-of-all-trades," who becomes master of none. It is a temptation to many pianoforte teachers, in

order to augment their living, to embark in the responsibilities of vocal teaching. The influence of such has resulted in a serious deterioration of general vocal efficiency. They attempt to work upon the lines of one of the so-called "systems" so numerously published. Though many of these vocal works may be admirable so far as they go, still they do not travel sufficiently to fit an inexperienced man for the teaching of vocal culture. There is much that an expert knows and feels which he cannot communicate in writing. The teacher who derives his knowledge from published theories finds himself badly equipped. The consequence is: much good vocal material is cast in wrong moulds, and when it becomes set it is difficult to adapt it to correct shapes. To find God's great gifts so misapplied must fill the discriminating mind with alarm. No one feels so keenly the lamentable aspect of this state of affairs as the specialist, whose life-long experience enables him to appreciate the dangers arising from the possession of too little knowledge.

The impression appears to prevail that any teacher is sufficient for the preliminary stages of vocalism. This is a grave error. The sounding of the first note should be directed only by the most skilful expert, otherwise faults arise which may not be eliminated without the expenditure of much time and money. The influences of a bad beginning are seldom wholly escaped. The consequences of faults are felt almost throughout one's whole career. Their effects are to be traced to-day in many vocalists who have adopted the art as a profession.

TEACHING ONLY FROM BOOKS RESULTS IN CAST-IRON METHODS which are not sufficiently pliable to admit of indispensable exceptions calculated to meet individual requirements.

MAXIMS

ALWAYS maintain a reserve of breath in the lungs.

Economise breath on unaccented notes, phrases, and ornaments.

Do not take a breath after every comma.

Endeavour to execute as many phrases (which bear relationship) in a single breath as possible.

In attempting a note, never strike under and slur up to the pitch.

In attacking, choose the one of the three methods I have described which best adapts itself to the mood of the words.

To open the mouth naturally, without tension, yawn, or half yawn (as the vowel position may require), in an indolent, indifferent manner. The muscles of the face will then become relaxed, and the tongue lie flat. It is difficult in the first instances for a student to form the lips naturally without

muscular restraint. In such cases adopt the yawn.

Don't sing runs with full power, but delicately, with sufficient increase of breath to preserve the rhythm.

Never go out of the way to introduce a high note, in conclusion, which has not been employed by the composer.

In piano effects preserve a steady, even swift flow of breath, however soft the passage.

Never take breath in the middle of a word.

Don't take breath between an article and a substantive, nor thus interrupt the flow of a phrase.

Take breath where one would pause in correct speaking.

There are exceptions, however, to all rules. For example: In Handel's "Angels, ever bright and fair," appears this sentence: "Take, O take me to your care." On "care" occurs such a long holding note it is impossible for most vocalists to deliver the sentence in one breath. It, therefore, becomes necessary to breathe

before "care." This can be done unobtrusively.

Profit by the faults as well as virtues of others.

Analyse both the good and the bad.

If anyone should derive helpful knowledge from this work let him adapt it to a closer investigation of the art.

CONCLUSION

I HAVE spoken freely, held nothing back. The subject, however, is not exhausted. A desire for simplicity has prevented that elaboration which might have advanced many important points in a clearer light. But I have said sufficient, I hope, to induce a closer analytical study of the subject. I am quite aware my conclusions will not be accepted unhesitatingly by everyone. The conservative instinct, which regards changes with horror, may prevent some from giving the fullest trial to the methods I have suggested. I would point out there is no finality in this world, He would be a bold man who would say that he had nothing more to learn, for the reason that the more knowledge one acquires the more he finds there is yet for him to know. Some teachers may view the relinquishment of earlier methods with reluctance. I only ask such to consider and apply my sugges-

tions, even in an experimental way, in order to test whether they are not capable of assisting to a better understanding.

I have endeavoured to deal so simply with the subject that anyone may understand. We shall not see any great improvement in vocal methods until the general public are able to discriminate between the good and the bad, and to understand why disparities arise. It must be painful for educated musicians to see how little penetration the general public show as regards the work of vocalists. The abnormal high note, however bad the tone, appeals to many, even though the rendering may have been so crude as to warrant the term "vulgar." If the English public can be interested sufficiently in the vocal art to enter on a better analysis and understanding, we shall find public singers compelled, by force of opinion, to improve their methods.

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